Rep. Slaughter Announces New Regional Airline Safety Push

WASHINGTON – Rep. Louise Slaughter (NY-28) today joined Reps. Chris Lee and Brian Higgins – along with other transportation leaders in the House - to introduce the *Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act of 2009*. This bipartisan legislation includes a number of long overdue reforms aimed at addressing aviation safety and restoring passenger confidence in the wake of the Continental Connection Flight 3407 tragedy that took the lives of 50 people on February 12, 2009. Among the key provisions of the bill are measures to combat pilot fatigue, improve training practices, and establish an electronic pilots records database.

"The lack of training and standards in the regional airline industry is shocking and unacceptable and this legislation is desperately needed," said Rep. Slaughter. "Addressing fatigue, creating a better pilot database and studying training regimens will help us make the industry safer and reassure the public. I am extremely grateful for Chairman Costello for working so hard with me on this issue and I am hopeful that this measure can be passed into law soon."

"With the strength of House transportation leadership support, the promise of comprehensive flight safety improvements move closer than ever to implementation," said Rep. Higgins. "Thanks to the advocacy of the families of Flight 3407, positive and lasting change that will make airline travel better for all Americans will rise out of disaster."

"This legislation represents a great leap forward in our efforts to address aviation safety and restore passenger confidence in the wake of the Flight 3407 tragedy," Rep. Lee said. "The strong bipartisan cooperation and the speed with which this measure has been crafted are a testament to the courage and persistence of the Flight 3407 families, who have worked tirelessly to see this day come."

"For the past two months, our message has been simple: We need to do more to set our pilots up for success in terms of offering top-of-the-line training programs, providing better oversight of the regional airlines, and revising our outdated policy on flight and duty time so that we are not flying on planes with fatigued pilots," said John Kausner of Clarence, who lost his 24 year old daughter Elly. "This bill makes huge strides in addressing the glaring deficiencies that allowed this tragedy to occur, and we are very thankful to Congressman Lee, Higgins and Congresswoman Slaughter, and the leadership of the House Transportation Committee for making this happen."

The lawmakers joined Rep. James Oberstar (D-MI), Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee; Rep. John Mica (R-FL) Ranking Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee; Rep. Jerry Costello (D-IL) Chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee; Rep. Thomas Petri (R-WI) Ranking Member of the Aviation Subcommittee in introducing this key legislation.

Key provisions of the *Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act of 2009* include:

·   **Air Carrier Safety and Pilot Training Task Force.** Establishes a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Task Force that will identify aviation industry best practices regarding: pilot training, pilot professional standards, and inter-carrier information sharing, mentoring and other safety-related practices. The Task Force shall report to Congress every 180 days on air carrier progress implementing best practices, and make recommendations for legislative and regulatory action.

·   **Implementation of National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Recommendations**. Requires FAA to ensure that pilots are trained on stall recovery, upset recovery, and that airlines provide remedial training. Mandates the FAA to convene a multidisciplinary panel on pilot training for stick pusher operations, and then take action to implement the recommendations of the panel. Requires the Secretary of Transportation to provide an annual report to Congress on what the agency is doing to address each open NTSB recommendation pertaining to part 121 air carriers.

·   **Pilot Qualifications, Screening, Mentoring & Professional Development**. Requires airline pilots to hold an FAA Airline Transport Pilot license (
1,500 minimum flight hours required
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Establishes comprehensive pre-employment screening of prospective pilots including an assessment of a pilot's skills, aptitudes, airmanship and suitability for functioning in the airline's operational environment.   Requires airlines to: establish pilot mentoring programs whereby highly experienced pilots will mentor junior pilots; create Pilot Professional Development Committees; modify training programs to accommodate new-hire pilots with different levels and types of flight experience; and provide leadership and command training to pilots in command (including complying with the "sterile cockpit rule").

·   **Pilot Records Database.** Creates a Pilot Records Database, within 90 days, to provide airlines with fast, electronic access to a pilot's comprehensive record. Information included in the database will include pilot's licenses, aircraft ratings, check rides, Notices of Disapproval and other flight proficiency tests. FAA will maintain the database and airlines will be able to access the database for hiring purposes only.

·   **Fatigue.** Directs the FAA to update and implement a new pilot flight and duty time rule and fatigue risk management plans within one year to more adequately track scientific research in the field of fatigue. Requires air carriers, within 90 days, to create fatigue risk management systems approved by FAA to proactively mitigate pilot fatigue. Studies the impact of pilot commuting on fatigue and provides preliminary results after four months to the FAA to be considered as part of the flight and duty time rulemaking.

·   **Pilot Training Study**. Directs the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study of: current pilot academic training requirements compared to flight education provided by accredited two- and four-year universities and foreign academic requirements; FAA's oversight of flight schools, and student loan options available to student pilots.

·   **Truth in Advertising.** Mandates that at the first page of an Internet website that sells airline tickets to disclose to the purchaser of each ticket the air carrier that operates each segment of the flight.

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